

German Occupation and the Brest Treaty

March – May 1918



“... Чтобы защитить власть рабочих и крестьян от разбойников, т. е. от помещиков и капиталистов, нам нужна могучая красная армия.”

“... In order to protect the authority of the workers and peasants from the robbers, that is from the landowners and capitalists, we need the mighty Red Army.”

Map 2

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Colored lithographic print, 64 x 102 cm. Compilers: A. N. de-Lazari and N. N. Lesevitskii.

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Historical Background and Thematic Design

The Bolsheviks participated in the overthrow of power on November 7, 1917, with two overriding goals: to end Russia's war with the Central Powers and ignite a revolution on a global scale. One of the very first decrees adopted by the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets was an immediate declaration of peace, calling for a suspension of hostilities with all warring powers. While the Allies pondered the questions of Bolshevik intentions and legitimacy, the German High Command responded eagerly, viewing the overtures as an opportunity for relocating troops from the Eastern Front to Western Europe in support of a massive offensive planned for spring 1918. On December 5, the Bolsheviks and the Central Powers entered into a separate armistice, with formal peace negotiations beginning on December 22 at the headquarters of the Eastern German Army in the Russian border town of Brest-Litovsk.



Symbolizing this on the map is the large white flag flying over Brest-Litovsk with the phrase “Brest peace treaty.” Threatened by a renewed German advance, the Bolsheviks bitterly accepted the terms and signed a separate treaty with the Central Powers on March 3, 1918. It was finally ratified by the Seventh Party Congress on March 8, 1918, at the same meeting in which the Bolsheviks renamed themselves the Russian Communist Party. The Brest-Litovsk Treaty granted ruinous territorial concessions to Germany, the extent of which is indicated by the territory colored in brown being overrun by German troops silhouetted in blue and defended by Russian troops in red. Nevertheless, acceptance of the treaty enabled the Bolsheviks to focus their attention on the defeat of opposition forces developing in Russia and to spread a revolutionary war to the rest of Europe. **Figure 4**

Above Kiev, Ukraine, flies a flag with stripes of yellow over blue, with an emblem of a white cross against a black circular field. It symbolizes the rule of Pavlo Petrovych Skoropadskyi, a Cossack, an aristocrat, and a lieutenant-general in the former czarist Army, whom the Germans backed as a puppet ruler. The accompany-



Skoropadski, der Hetmann der Ukraine mit seinen Offizieren -- A member of the Cossack gentry, Pavlo Skoropadskyi proclaimed himself Hetman of All Ukraine under the auspices of the German military. His Hetmanate-Ukrainian State lasted from April to December, 1918.

ing words read “the government of Skoropadskyi 29 April,” which indicates his installation as Hetman; whereas those below Kiev read “the German dispersal of the Ukraine legislative body, known as the *Rada*.”

Figure 5

The most dominant visual images are the color red and outlines of soldiers. Russia and Finland are colored in a vibrant red, signifying territory under communist control. Territory colored in brown identifies lands in Ukraine lost to Germany, as well as territories that had been lost to the Ottomans in the Russo-Turkish War of 1878, namely Armenia and the regions of Ardahan, Kars, and Batumi, but regained by Russia and subsequently lost again via the 1918 treaty.

The heavy blue line with small projections extending from Riga to the mouth of the Danube indicates the front line at the time of the December armistice. The heavy blue line extending from Narva to Rostov-on-Don frames the additional territory taken by the Germans during the period February 18 to March 4, in which Bolshevik capitulation gave up the territories surrounding Dvinsk, Pskov, Narva, Minsk, Mogilev, Kiev, and Kharkov.

Flags denote centers of power and rule, while symbols denote significant events of the period. Prominent among them are the five-pointed red star, at the center of which is a giant red flag, both centered on Moscow, which is enveloped in a sunburst to identify it as the new seat of Bolshevik power. Flags also recognize the states of the Baltics, Poland, Romania, and Finland, as well as temporary authority in Ukraine and the Caucasus.

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Conventional Symbols

1. *Frontline of the World War.*
2. *Position of the Red Army in March.*
3. *Position of the Red Army in early April.*
4. *Position of the Red Army by the 20th day of April.*
5. *Position of Red forces and Whites in early May.*
6. *Line of German occupation in early May.*
7. *Death of Kornilov, killed by a Red shell during a failed attack on Ekaterinodar.*
8. *Proclamation of Sfatul Țării threatened by Romanian forces. Annexation of Bessarabia by Romania, 9 April.*
9. *Opening of the Russian-Ukrainian peace conference.*
10. *Headquarters of the veiled area .*

Declarations of Independence of Border States

11. *Finland.*
12. *Estonia.*
13. *Latvia.*
14. *Lithuania.*
15. *Declaration of Independence of Belarus, 29 May.*

